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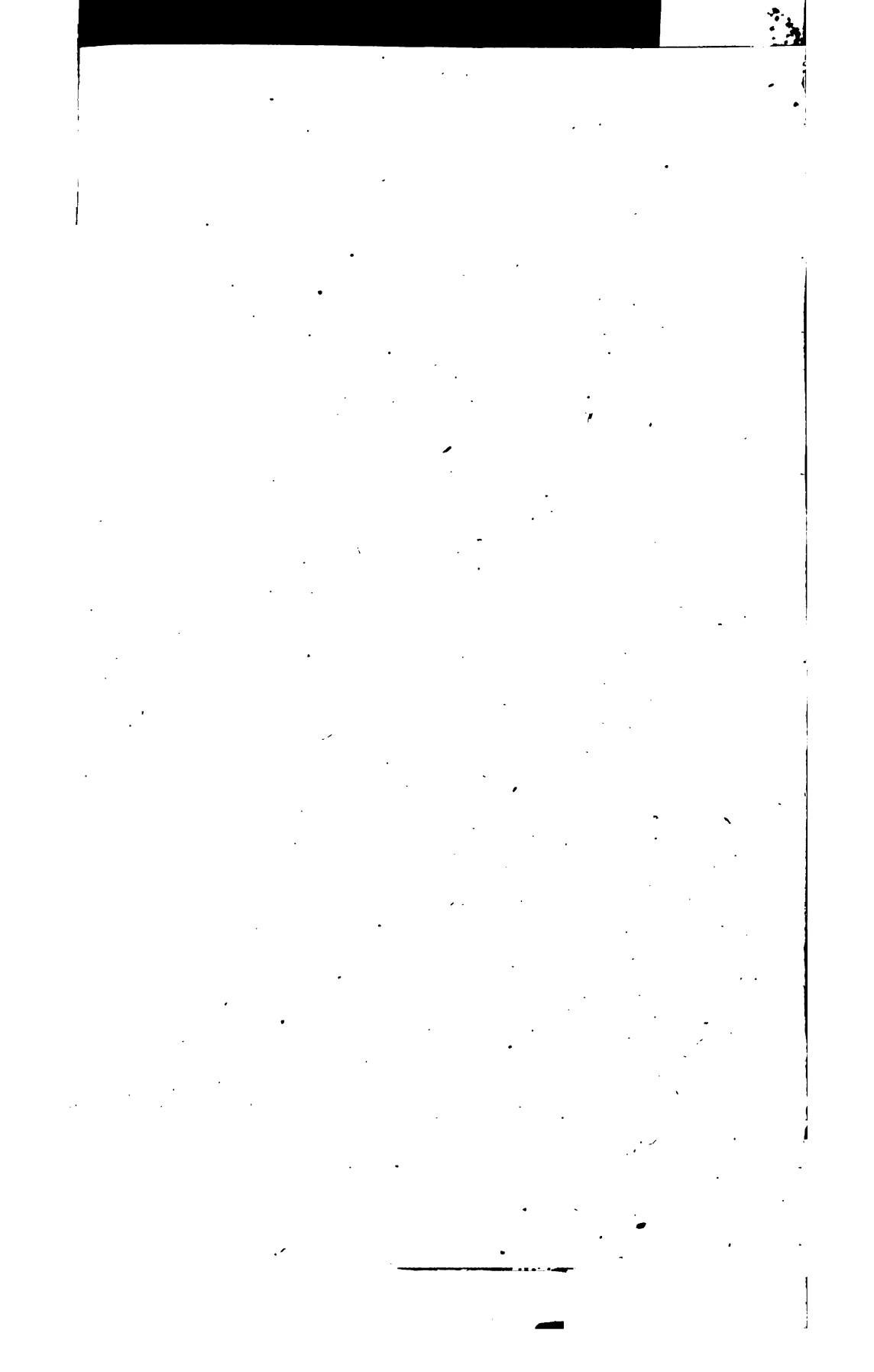
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The  
mosquito shore

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A

# LETTER

TO

THE EDITOR

OF

THE QUARTERLY REVIEW,

Oct. 1822

FOR FEBRUARY 1823,

*The Poyxis bubalis;*  
A REVIEW

OF

CAPTAIN STRANGEWAY'S SKETCH

OF THE

MOSQUITO SHORE.

Signed "Vixx", London.

London:

PRINTED FOR C. AND J. RIVINGTON,

62, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,

AND 3, WATERLOO-PLACE, FALL-MALL.

1823.

~~2356, 48~~

SA4773.9

1879, Oct. 21,  
Exch. of dupl.

L A N D O N :

PRINTED BY R. GILBERT,

ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

## LETTER,

&c. &c.

SIR,

HAVING seen your observations on the intended Colony on the Mosquito Shore, you must excuse my making some comment on them.

I am persuaded that you misunderstand the character, and the present intentions of Sir Gregor Macgregor: he was indeed in the service of the Colombian Government; but has broken off all connection with it; whatever his political prepossessions may have been in early life, he has no views with respect to Poyais, but such as are consistent with the established state of things as regulated by the Treaties to which you advert; and as these took place under the sanction of that illustrious minister, William Pitt, we may pronounce that they were founded on valid reasons. The high respect I entertain for his character extorts this concession from me, or I should decisively assert, that those Treaties were not warranted by justice or humanity. The Mosquito Indians had never been conquered

by the Spaniards ; they made a voluntary cession of the Mosquito territory to the English in 1741 : a circumstance which ought to have preserved them from being transferred to their bitter enemies the Spaniards : nor were the conditions of those Treaties more justifiable with regard to British subjects, who had settled on the Mosquito Shore under the faith of the British Government, which had in a regular manner authorized the occupation of that country by the appointment of a Superintendent ; their property was thereby rendered of little or no value, and themselves compelled to remove to a situation they thought very inferior to the Mosquito Shore. I advert to the option of settling at Honduras.

But this proceeding might be necessary; the good of the many may be allowed to preponderate over that of the few : it is therefore incumbent on us to submit to the regulations established by those Treaties. The territory belongs to Spain : and Sir Gregor Macgregor, being fully apprized of this circumstance, has made proposals to the Royal Government of Spain, in order to obtain its sanction to the grant (made to him by the Mosquito King) of the territory of Poyal. The King of the Mosquito Indians is possessed of that rank by hereditary descent ; he is not to be reduced to the level of King Tom or King Jack, in Africa : the British Government thought him of sufficient estimation to rescue him from the hands of his uncle, who usurped the dominion at the death

of the late King his father ; he was educated at Jamaica, and afterwards sent down to the Mosquito Shore, and acknowledged there as the hereditary Sovereign.

The title of King may seem misapplied to the simple pastoral state of these Indians : but as it is an hereditary legitimate government, it is I think deserving of some consideration from those who think legitimate hereditary descent a solid foundation for the obedience of the subject to monarchical dominion.

I will admit that it is a question how far the Mosquito King, who, I understand, is the real possessor *de facto*, of the Mosquito Shore, can give Sir Gregor Macgregor a legal title to the territory of Poyais, when the King of Spain is the proprietor *de jure* : but to meet this objection, Sir Gregor is disposed to hold his territory as a subsidiary to the Spanish Crown, instead of denying the Spanish claims to that country ; which might be called nominal, because I have always heard, that the Spaniards could not establish a single settlement on the Mosquito Shore.

I will suppose that he has succeeded with the Spanish Government, and is acknowledged as Cacique of Poyais, as is reported ; what just reason can be given, that the British Government, or any writers who possess weight with the sound and respectable part of society, should obstruct his views ? He is one of the chiefs of one of the most ancient clans, distinguished for its sufferings

from a loyal principle, and descended from royal blood : if he establishes himself in that unknown country, what will his prosperous fortunes injure us ? why, if his Highland followers, expelled by new arrangements of an agricultural nature from their native wilds, choose to rely on him as a leader qualified to establish them in a country which is likely to console them for their loss, and whose fertile soil promises subsistence to them with little labour, should he be represented as seducing them from a comfortable home ? The Indians have always been the friends of the English ; pleased with their intercourse, proud of their preference, there is then no fair ground for distrusting their good will in the present case :—the flame of the revolution is far distant from Poyais ; secured on one side by the sea, not very safe for the approach of ships of size or burden : on the other sides fenced by lofty and almost inaccessible mountains ; will Spain think it worth her while to expel these colonists, who, conscious of legal right, have acknowledged it, and sought protection while flying from distress ? Spain is now, we may hope, more enlightened than to keep in a state of rank unproductive fertility, a country from which they derive no advantage. If it should prove otherwise, it would then be a matter of the deepest regret, that the liberality of the British Government should abolish restrictions on the trade of other nations, unless Spain will open her coasts to the British merchant. Let it not be said that I unfairly exalt

the value of Poyais : the fertility of the Mosquito Shore is such, that three crops of Indian corn have been produced within the year : this remarkable fact is not only mentioned by Captain Strangeways, but by a manuscript memoir, written in the year 1757, which could not have been in the hands of Sir Gregor or his friend : but maize is an article of the first importance to the negro population of the West Indies : and without the negro, what would become of our West Indian property, and commerce ? By the new regulations, negro provisions may be imported from the United States into the West Indies : but the United States are more distant, they are less fertile, consequently we may suppose, that Poyais can furnish provisions far cheaper than the American provinces. The same may be observed of timber fit for plantation uses and ship-building. Here is an inexhaustible fund for the consumption of the West Indies, and that near at hand ; even now, the maritime towns of the United States, whose forests are exhausted, are drawing their supplies of ship timber from the Mosquito Shore. This is a fact which should rouse our attention : it is more equitable that our own countrymen in Poyais should have the advantage of furnishing the West Indies with timber and provisions, than the Americans, whose interests have become disunited from our own.

One great obstacle to the former success of colonizing the Mosquito Shore was the apprehended rivalship of Jamaica ; but the present plan is

that of ministering to the wants and fostering the prosperity of that Island. It does not appear that the harbours on the Mosquito Shore are such as to warrant the expectation of emulating Jamaica ; they will be sufficient for the purpose above stated ; and may be improved by art, as capital increases, and the Society of Poyais assumes a regular form.

I am as much an enemy as yourself to unfounded assumptions of right; to the imprudent pretensions of Charlatans, who set up for kings ; but Sir Gregor, (whatever the views may have been of those with whom he formerly associated himself,) bows to sound principles : his talents are of no common order : he is willing to devote them to the arduous task of colonizing a new country, one untrodden for years by any European foot. Lord Bacon considers such an enterprize as deserving the title of heroic ; does he not deserve to be encouraged by an enlightened Government ? While others have been amassing wealth, or devoting their lives to unproductive study, or abandoned to idleness and debauched pleasures, his life has been passed in scenes of the greatest energy and exertion, to contribute to the success of a cause, which he thought deserved his best powers, and to which, if I recollect right, you have in former volumes of your work given your favourable suffrage. The most strenuous advocates for the rights of Monarchy allow, that the case of Spanish America called for redress ; but even if it could

be proved, that Sir Gregor Macgregor's views were at first revolutionary, and went beyond the just bounds of redressing the grievances of the South Americans, an admission which I have no grounds for making, it is by no means candid or liberal, if he is now desirous to retrace his steps, and proceed in the sound and right way, that you should wish to discourage him; since to carry such a complicated plan into effect; to arrange every thing necessary for the establishment of a number of Settlers in a wild country, many of whom perhaps are indigent, ignorant, and undisciplined, is a momentous undertaking; to seize on the only failure in his military life, to hold him up to derision, is neither liberal or just, and to blot out all the brilliant actions in which he has been engaged; and even this reverse alluded to has been explained so, as to prove that it was unavoidable. But not being myself sufficiently master of the details, I will leave the explanation of that transaction to other hands.

With regard to his assumption of the title "Cacique," it was I presume requisite for possessing due influence among the Poyais Indians, that he should be as it were identified with them, as a native Chief; especially as one leading object of his institutions is to civilize, and to convert them to Christianity; and altogether, to amalgamate them with the European Settlers.

But as he is sometimes designated by his countryman as Prince of Poyais, it may be requisite

to offer some remarks, on this unauthorized title. It often happens, according to the observation of the Poet—

“ *Invidia accredit, Privato quæ minor esset.*”

If he had remained no other than General Macgregor, whose services so eminently contributed to the emancipation of Spanish America, he would, I presume, as the Feudal Proprietor of the territory of Poyais, be in point of fact, and to all useful purposes, a Petty Sovereign,

But even the title of Prince may not unreasonably (though by courtesy) be allowed him : the great body of his Settlers, it is expected, will be Highlanders ; they have the highest notions of subordination to their Chief ; the Macgregors in particular were faithful to their exiled Monarch's name and rights, when he was deserted by all beside. It may be useful that there should be some one in an infant state, to whom the Settlers should look up as the centre of authority, the key stone of the social arch. Sir Gregor is a man of vigour and capacity, fertile in expedients, inexhaustible in mental resources ; there is that about him, which will always command influence, and attract followers. Let then his bold and comprehensive schemes be carried into effect ; they appear likely to injure no one, but on the contrary to benefit many : let not a mean jealousy obstruct the humane and enlarged views which he has embraced, and labours day and night to carry into effect.

If there were a number of such petty kingdoms erected over the Continent of South America tributary to Ferdinand, opening their trade to all Nations, would not the Spanish Monarchy be enriched, and all countries reciprocally benefited?

It would be very opposite to the system on which the British administration has long acted, during these times of difficulty, if it should discourage or repress the emigration to Poyais. Consider what numbers have for years past, expended all their incomes in Rome, in Brussels, in Paris, and other places of the European continent: why then should the Highlander be interdicted from settling in Poyais? Why should not the former be compelled to settle or sojourn in our colonies of Canada, the Cape, or Van Dieman's Land? because they would consult their inclination. Why then should not the brave Highlander, who has fought your battles with distinguished courage; indeed has contributed an ample share towards the glories which encircle his present Majesty's reign;—Why should he not have his free choice, in seeking an asylum from distress? a distress, not the result of his own vices, as is the case of many who emigrate, but of the operation of the laws of property; and which probably is unobjectionable, except so far as regards the present inconvenience of those expelled from the Highlands by the great land Proprietors; of whom, if I were one, seeing the repugnance expressed by the wild inhabitants to emigrate to the British

Colonies, I should feel obliged in conscience to smooth the way to regions, for which their predilection, might stimulate them to bear up against the difficulties to which all new Settlers are exposed.

The native of Scotland, when his resources are cut off, must emigrate or die: he has no poor-rates, the sure refuge which Heaven has appointed for our own poor: and most culpable will be the man who ever abolishes them; though I should gladly see them curtailed in their operation, and rectified in their application.

There is another argument in favour of the Mosquito Shore being settled by English colonists; if it is correct, that the Spanish Government owes this country a debt of considerable magnitude, would it be generous to call upon that Government now to discharge it, while environed with difficulties? though it must be acknowledged we are very greatly in want of repayment; since one-third of the property in the kingdom, the landed interest, is suffering to an extreme degree; almost on the verge of ruin. Great numbers of this class must emigrate: even the handsome relief afforded by the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, comes, I fear, too late. They must emigrate: they cannot submit to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. Why not, then, prevail on the Spaniards to give up their claim to the Mosquito Shore? Afford them an asylum there: in a short time the religion, the laws, the

trade, and industry of Britain; will insinuate themselves, into those wild regions. Spain (whatever may be said) cares little, and knows less, about the Mosquito Shore. It is a country natural to the English : it has always been the darling object of the Scotch ; and they are the people of all others, capable of diffusing the blessings of civilized life over a new uncultivated country; brave, patient, persevering, moral, and religious. I call it a new country ; for though there were many English inhabitants there for a hundred years previous to the cession of it by the Indians to the British, in 1741, yet since 1786, when the country was transferred to Spain, hardly any European has resided there.

Instead of giving Cuba as a compensation for that debt, which is peopled by Spaniards, who from the prejudices of their religion, would not be likely to acquiesce in the dominion of England, let the British Government take possession of the Mosquito Shore. If the safety of Guatemala, and other valuable possessions of the Spanish Crown in that region, should be now, as I have heard it was in 1786, an object of anxiety, let that affair be secured by treaty ; and surely, if we are so strict in adhering to the former treaty, Spain might rely upon us, under a new arrangement.

Nor let it be forgotten, how great an advantage to commerce, it might be, if by such an arrangement we could prevent the Mosquito Shore becoming the dépôt of piratical adventurers. A recent pub-

lication, bearing strong marks of authenticity, (the Journal of Penrose,) mentions a remarkable fact to authorize my suggestion; and the reason is evident why it should continue to be the resort of Buccaneers and Pirates, from having been, as I observed, since the year 1786, a deserted country. It has numerous rivers, and but few harbours. The entrance of the rivers is obstructed to large vessels by a bar at their mouths; but the craft of the country, and other vessels drawing little water, easily find an entrance: by this method the Pirate can defy his pursuer, hide his booty in the woods, and sally forth again to annoy the regular trader. When the country should become inhabited, it would not be difficult to open the mouths of these rivers for the purposes of commerce, as is proved by a recent instance, in a harbour on the coast of Sussex, which for many years had been almost useless, from a similar cause.

In recommending this addition to our colonies, it was not my wish to interfere with the territory of Poyais, which is but about a third-part of the Mosquito Shore. If Sir Gregor Macgregor can conciliate the Spanish Government, so far as to sanction his acquisition of it from the Indian King, it would not be just to interfere with his previous right. There remain about twenty millions of acres unoccupied, the southern part of which borders on the river of San Juan; which offers, if made navigable, an easy communication through the Lakes of Nicaragua and Leon, to the Pacific

Ocean ; rendering a north-west passage no longer an object of painful investigation, and the voyage round Cape Horn needless. It would exceed the limits of this Letter to enter at large into the practicability and the advantages of such an undertaking.

Verbum amplius addam, as you facetiously recommend the celebrated General, whose enterprise I have exerted my humble endeavours to vindicate, to take for his partner in the sovereignty of Poyais, the soi-disant Princess Olive ; I ought to inform you, that unless he dispenses with the laws of monogamy, it will be impracticable for him to adopt your recommendation ; since an interesting and elegant Spanish American lady, of high connections, and considerable property, (as I have been informed) in the province of Caraccas, has already anticipated that honour. She has followed this enterprizing soldier through most trying scenes of danger and suffering, and will, I trust, live to share his more prosperous fortunes.

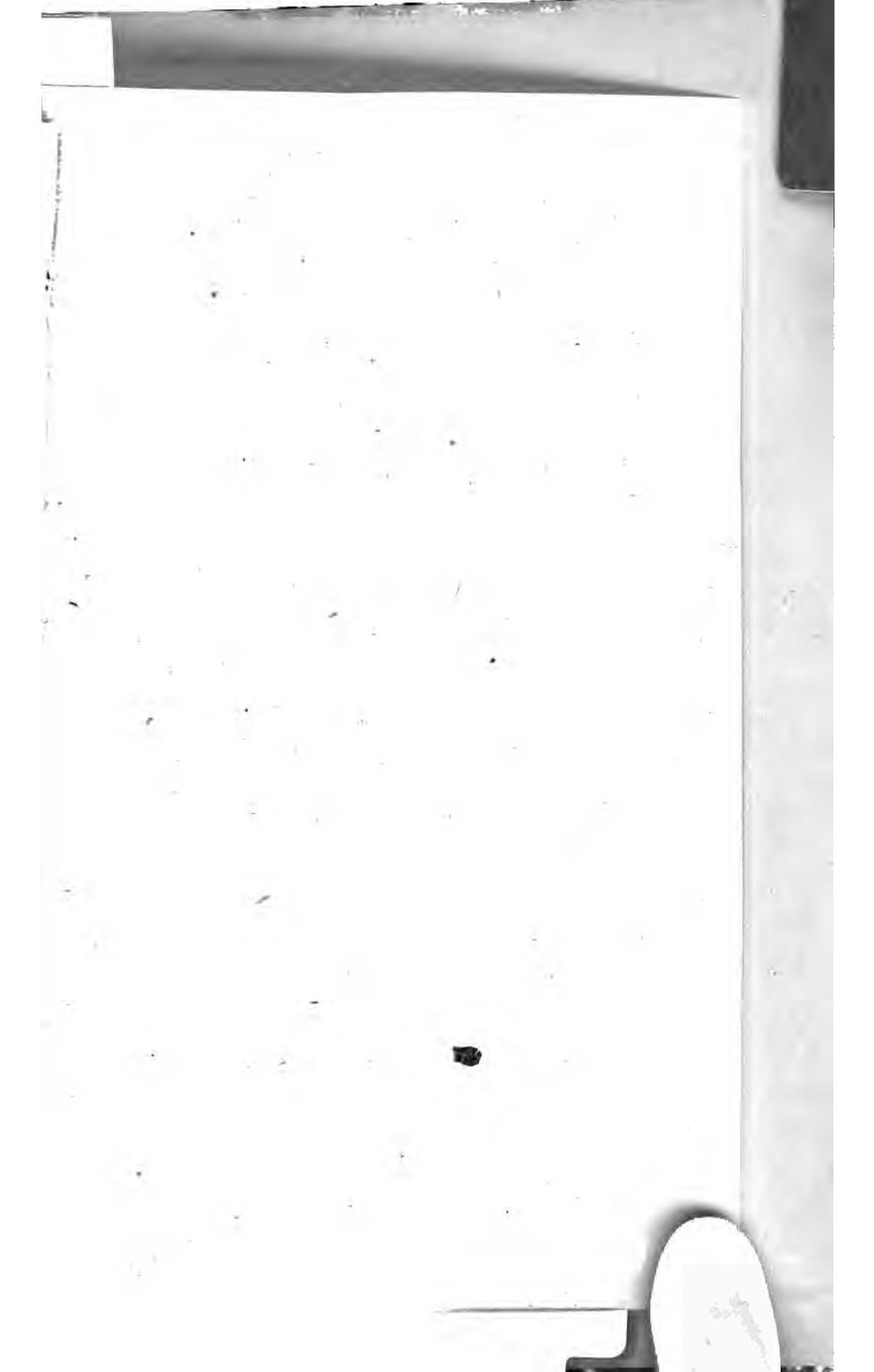
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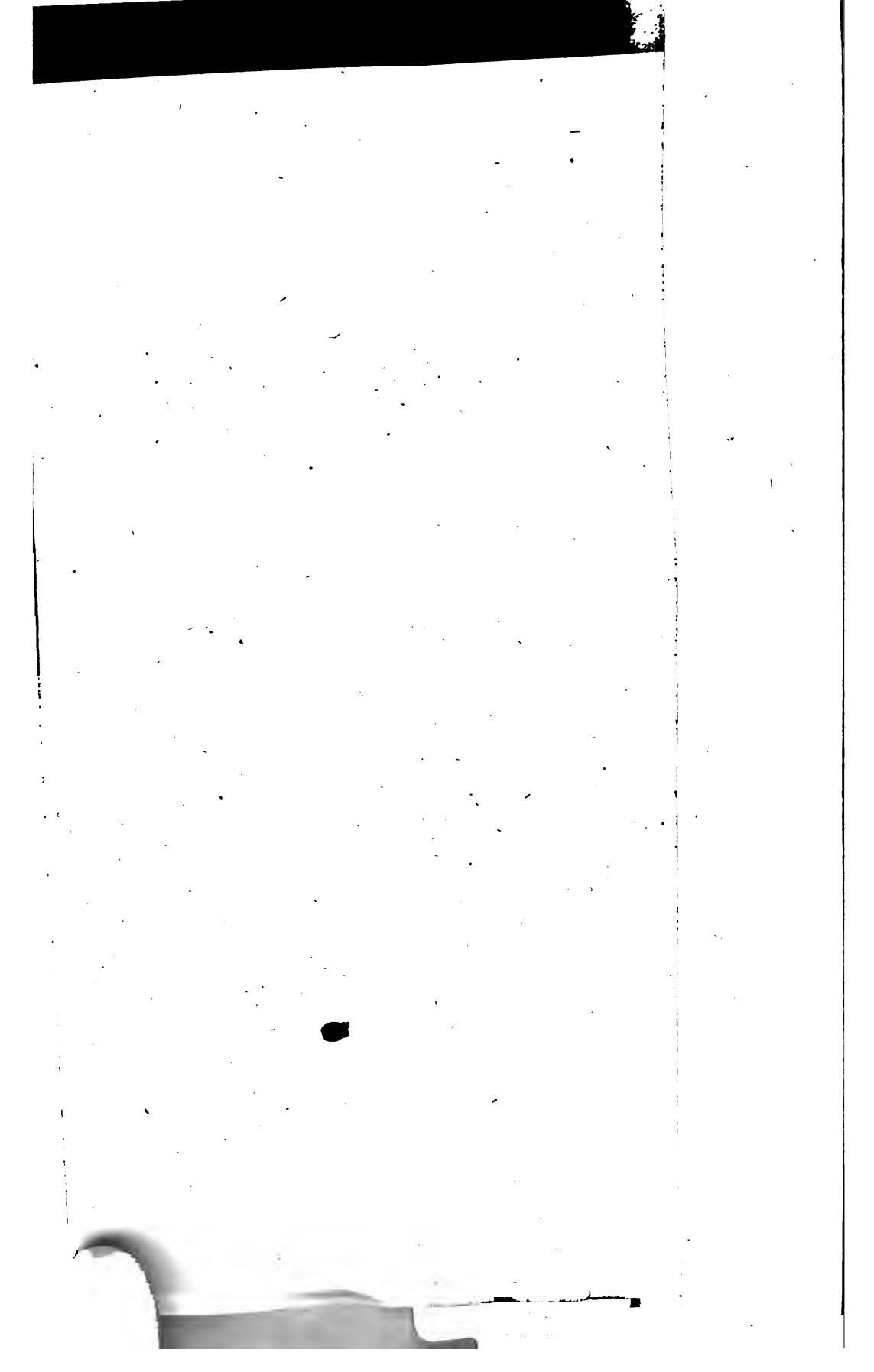
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